

Education Cabinet

Kentucky receives grant to hold summit on dropout prevention

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The Kentucky Education Cabinet has been awarded \$25,000 in grant funding from the America's Promise Alliance to fund a statewide summit on dropout prevention. The summit will be held in summer 2009.

First Lady Jane Beshear, a former teacher, attended the Eastern Kentucky Regional Dropout Summit held in Mt. Sterling in February and saw firsthand the importance of such summits. "The dropout problem does not begin in high school," she said. "The goal of preparing and keeping children in school must be addressed throughout a child's life. That is why I am grateful to the America's Promise Alliance for this exciting opportunity to learn about innovative programs Kentucky communities already employ and brainstorm new ways to keep students in school." Ms. Beshear will have a hands-on role in the planning and execution of the summit.

A summit planning team will be formed within the next several weeks. Members will include leaders from the government, industry, health, nonprofit and education sectors. Youth members will also be included in the planning team. Kentucky will hold smaller forums across the state in the months leading up to the summit. This model allows more parents, teachers, students, community groups and business interests the opportunity to share their experiences and ideas. Regional meetings will also allow summit planners to learn about programs that work at the local level, which could be duplicated across the state, and could be showcased at the statewide summit.

Education Cabinet Secretary Helen W. Mountjoy said, "Governor Beshear has expressed a strong commitment to improving education at all levels and to the development of early intervention programs for students at risk. Raising our expectations of students requires increased support mechanisms for those students. The summit will help us refine objectives and develop measures to further improve the statewide graduation rate."

Funding from the America's Promise Alliance was contingent upon Kentucky's commitment to improving the dropout rate and a commitment to including the Alliance's National Action Strategies (Where the Kids Are, Ready for the Real World, and All Kids Covered) in the summit. The "10-Point Plan to Address America's Silent Epidemic," an Alliance publication, will provide a framework to begin discussion at the regional forums.

The funding application was supported by Governor Beshear, Kentucky Department of Education Commissioner Jon E. Draud and Kentucky Child Now, the America's Promise Alliance partner agency

for Kentucky. Partner agencies will be sought from the nonprofit, government and other sectors in the coming months.